

MORGAN COUNTY

Honorable David J. Breland Honorable Shelly Waters

Morgan County Courthouse

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Director: Cindy R. Moses

Council Priorities

1. Juvenile detention facility

Insure that a local detention facility is constructed in Morgan County with the required services to help in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and their families.

2. Transportation

Transportation will be removed as a barrier for families seeking access to services and jobs.

3. Drug, alcohol and gang involvement

Identifying and addressing issues involving drugs, gangs and violence on both the State wide and local basis.

Issues

Issues are the primary concerns or problems facing children in the county

Early Care Education

Children (0 – 5) are provided opportunities to fully develop emotionally, socially, physically, and cognitively and are ready to succeed.

Advocacy

Action Steps

- 1) Advocate for best practices within the educational system (i.e. those that reflect age appropriate curriculum and expectations with regard to children, ages 0-5.
- 2) Advocate for age appropriate interaction and expectations for children, ages 0-5 within the family system.
- 3) Advocate for Latino families in the community (i.e. citizenship opportunities, drivers license requirements, traffic law, and family support and community resource opportunities.
- 4) Educate the community about the benefits of a healthy marriage.
- 5) Programs are only possible when adequate funding is available.

Child health

Action Steps

- 1) Encourage the availability and use of affordable prenatal care for all residents of our county.

Family education services

Action Steps

- 1) Increase demonstrated support of existing programs providing family/parenting education services.
- 2) Endorse and support programs providing early childhood and parenting education.
- 3) Endorse and support programs providing adult continuing education (i.e. GED, ESL, vocational support, and workforce development) for families with children ages 0-5.
- 4) Increase collaboration among supporting agencies to prevent duplication of services.
- 5) Provide adequate funding for quality childcare, universally available, to all working parents regardless of work schedule or income.
- 6) Disseminate information of current research trends regarding teen pregnancy and its prevention.

Transportation

Action Steps

- 1) Increase demonstrated support by agencies of existing transportation resources.
- 2) Assess creative ways that agencies can collaborate to assist families with children ages 0-5 in accessing transportation services (i.e. scheduling appointments, carpooling, etc).
- 3) Monitor transportation needs of families with children ages 0-5 and report those needs to Morgan County Commission, Decatur City Council and other local municipalities.

Child health

Action Steps

- 1) Identify existing efforts and increase demonstrated support of existing programs designed to address teen pregnancy prevention.
- 2) Identify factors that lead to teen pregnancy.
- 3) Implement programs, which deal with the issue of responsibilities with regard to paternity.
- 4) Partner with local faith based ministers to formulate a local teen pregnancy prevention program.

Economic Security

Children grow up in a financially stable home where the child's basic needs can be met.

Access to job, school, social services etc.

Action Steps

- 1) Support community task force developed to address transportation issues and report to the Morgan County Children's Policy Council quarterly.
- 2) Encourage grant funding and innovative solutions that are generated by individual agencies in attempts to alleviate student transportation issues.
- 3) Collaborate with local medical facilities, schools, MCATS, Volunteer Center and Madison County to coordinate transportation services by using the current fleet of buses.
- 4) Share information with other agencies by developing a database of information regarding transportation sources (i.e. times, fee, and destinations).
- 5) Assess ways agencies can work together to assist families and children with transportation problems in accessing needed services (i.e., scheduling, appointments, sharing transportation responsibilities, etc.)

Improve individual employability

Action Steps

- 1) Provide endorsement and support to literacy programs which assist with ESL and GED acquisition.
- 2) Endorse and support initiatives that provide career development and vocational skills.
- 3) Collaborate with the Decatur/Morgan County Chamber of Commerce workforce development, Morgan County EDA, Calhoun Community College, local school systems and any other agencies in investigating the need for a trade school type alternative curriculum for the student desiring to enter the skilled labor workforce.
- 4) Cultivate support to form and develop partnerships with the business community in order to assist with job placement for those youth entering the work force.
- 5) Continue support with the development of the System of Services Center, a continuum of service for youth at risk.
- 6) Maintain a collaborative relationship with agencies such as but not limited to Decatur Youth Services, Hartselle Community Task Force and Hartselle Youth Alive.
- 7) Identify the possibility of year round ESL classes for youth.
- 8) Identify ways to cultivate relationships with members of the Latino community in order to overcome the communication barrier in collaboration with the Morgan County workforce development committee.
- 9) Form a coalition of various minority leaders to better aid in developing job training and opportunities for their children.
- 10) Utilize the media, selected local businesses, schools and radio stations to publicize social services for both English speaking and Spanish speaking families and children.
- 11) Research creative approaches in order to incorporate Immigrate businesses into the community.

Education

Children learn the skills necessary to become productive citizens.

Transportation

Action Steps

- 1) Increase demonstrated support by agencies of existing transportation issues.
- 2) Access creative ways that agencies can collaborate to assist families with children ages 6-18 in accessing transportation services (i.e. scheduling, appointments, carpooling, etc.).
- 3) Monitor transportation needs of families with children and report those needs to the Morgan County Commission, Decatur City Council and other local municipalities.
- 4) Retrieve information from the school systems and report at the regularly scheduled Morgan County Children's Policy Council meetings regarding transportation issues affecting the children of Morgan County.

Truancy

Action Steps

- 1) Support and endorse programs that provide support services for truancy and school drop out issues.
- 2) Support and endorse programs that provide services which promote academic achievement resulting in regular attendance and less truancy.

Family education services

Action Steps

- 1) Increase demonstrated support of existing programs providing family/parenting education services by reviewing the same to prevent duplication of services and to make sure they meet the requirements set forth in the Morgan County Children's Policy Council Needs Assessment.
- 2) Endorse and support programs providing early childhood and parenting education with community agencies.
- 3) Support drug and violence intervention and prevention programs and provide services that promote drug awareness, drug violence prevention with community agencies.

School safety

Action Steps

- 1) Endorse and support programs supporting the safe school initiatives.
- 2) Implement coordinated emergency preparedness plans into all schools within the county which would deal with emergency/disaster situations.
- 3) Identify funding for security camera systems and aerial photo systems to aid in emergency preparedness and response to all schools in our county.

Alternative education

Action Steps

- 1) Endorse and support programs providing alternative education for children attending public schools in Morgan County.
- 2) Endorse and support programs providing adult continuing education (i.e. GED, ESL, vocational support, and work force development) for families with children, ages 6-18 within all schools in Morgan County.
- 3) Increase collaboration among support agencies to prevent duplication of services among supporting agencies by emails, Morgan County Children's Policy Council web site and presentations before the policy council during its regularly scheduled meetings.

Health

Children's (0 - 19) physical and mental well-being in the county.

Child health and safety

Action Steps

- 1) The Morgan County Children's Policy Council Health and Safety Committee have identified the following as the most critical issues to be addressed.
 - A. Accessibility to health care insurance for moderate to low income families
 - B. Accessibility to affordable childcare for moderate to low income families
 - C. Disseminating information on health care agencies and their services to the public at-large
- 2) Continue to collaborate with the Morgan County Substance Abuse Network and various other agencies in conducting at least one annual community wide conference, such as the Child Safety Conference, which addresses children's health and safety issues.
- 3) Create a committee by the last month of the 2005-2006 fiscal years to provide multi-lingual health information and education to under served groups with attention to language and cultural barriers.
- 4) Disseminate All Kids information quarterly to members of the Children's Policy Council.
- 5) Provide a quarterly report detailing the number of Morgan County youth who have access All Kids insurance. If possible, this report will quantify the number and type of services received.
- 6) Establish a committee, which will prepare data and a description of the community needs for people, ages 0-18, who have mental\ physical disabilities and need supervised activities and environments.
- 7) Identify resources that can assist with the enhancement of viable childcare for working parents.
- 8) Identify resources that can aid in educating the community about childhood obesity and collaborate with agency members in an effort to disseminate information.

Mental health/substance abuse/developmental disability prevention education and treatment

Action Steps

- 1) Endorse grant applications for the development and expansion of mental health, substance and treatment programs for children and youth.
- 2) Identify available MCCPC services agencies \ resources for children and youth through Morgan County Children's Policy Council website and other media.

Juvenile crisis support team

Action Steps

- 1) Endorse and support a crisis response team in evaluating juvenile offenders when being brought to the jail. The crisis response team will be available 24/7 to consult with parents and collaborate with agency members in an effort to disseminate information.
- 2) Crisis response team members evaluating juvenile offenders will play an important role in the prevention of juveniles wanting to harm themselves or others.

Parent Involvement Skills

Parents and guardians participation and effectiveness in fostering an environment for children to become mature, responsible and independent adults.

Community collaboration

Action Steps

- 1) Work with the school systems to expand the Decatur City School FACT (Family Assistance through Community Ties) program and to establish Morgan County School programs. The FACT program collaborates with local agencies, mental health workers and parent volunteers to identify and address the needs of children and families by providing onsite mini-resource centers located within specific schools.
- 2) Keep school counselors aware of available resources by disseminating information.
- 3) Increase awareness of community resources through television, radio shows, newspapers, and PTA newsletters.
- 4) Distribute bilingual brochures and flyers to schools, churches, businesses, public libraries, public health department, hospitals and other agencies.
- 5) Develop email network and Intranet web site for coordination of service information so that resource information is readily available to all Morgan County Children's Policy Council member agencies and their employees.
- 6) Expand the Family Resource Center(s) into neighborhoods, specifically the Latino neighborhoods (apartment complexes, Wal-Mart or similar shopping outlets).
- 7) Establish a sub-committee of faith-based organizations to work with family resource centers.

Parent education

Action Steps

- 1) Classes and program supporting health, positive parenting and family relationships.
- 2) Offer parental education classes in neighborhoods (schools, churches, Boys & Girls Clubs, etc.) to promote involvement and participation of parents.
- 3) Offer optional times and locations for parenting classes.
- 4) Provide child care along with parenting classes.
- 5) Continue to look for transportation resources.
- 6) Find and employ bilingual parent educators.

Parents and guardians/custodial issues

Action Steps

- 1) Promote fatherhood initiatives and involvement.
- 2) Expand classes for separated parents and non-co-habituating parents.

Safety

Children live free of abuse, neglect, crime, and drugs.

Substance abuse by both adults and children

Action Steps

- 1) Promote awareness of this issue through support of and commitment to programs designed to address substance abuse.
- 2) Provide a continuous open dialogue regarding the provision of services to families affected by substance abuse at each Children's Policy Council meeting specifically regarding HIPAA regulations to promote the exchange of information.
- 3) Endorse programs that provide early identification and intervention of children and families with issues related to substance abuse and violence.

Domestic (family) violence

Action Steps

- 1) Re-institute and invite the Domestic Violence Coalition to be represented on the Morgan County Children's Policy Council.
- 2) Promote collaboration among agencies concerned with child abuse, domestic violence, and spousal abuse.
- 3) Endorse services involved with the prevention and awareness of all types of domestic violence and child abuse by utilizing programs such as Children in the Middle.

Driver's education

Action Steps

- 1) Invite the court referral officer to be involved with the Children's Policy Council.
- 2) Encourage parents of juvenile problem drivers to attend driving school with their child.
- 3) Investigate research and encourage development of a local driving school for teens.
- 4) Work with the Latino community concerning driver's education.

Juvenile justice

Action Steps

- 1) Continue to seek funding for building and maintenance costs for a detention facility.
- 2) Work with juvenile probation officers to refer violent juveniles to lock down.
- 3) Insure communities are better served by having a local detention facility in Morgan County and by adding more beds for both males and females.
- 4) Insure that a local detention facility has the required services to help in the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders and their families.
- 5) Continue to support funding for administration of home monitoring and GPS tracking system for problematic juvenile offenders.
- 6) Continue to support funding for coordination of community services program and supervision of juvenile offenders ordered to perform community services in lieu of other court ordered sanctions.
- 7) Continue to support funding for Residential Step-Down Program for juvenile offenders prior to re-integration into the community following commitment to a state institution, orders to secure detention or orders to boot camp.
- 8) Support after school programs targeting juveniles as a deterrent to their committing offenses during those critical hours between 3 and 6 p.m.

Gang involvement

Action Steps

- 1) Identify early intervention of gang involvement.
- 2) Encourage local law enforcement, courts, schools and other agencies to share information.
- 3) Educate community about gang activity through community collaboration and organization.
- 4) Morgan County Children's Policy Council will collaborate with local agencies on educational materials related to gang involvement and interdiction with parents.
- 5) Support the Morgan County District Attorney's program called "FREEZE" which is a local program to match the Federal program called ICE which is a channel for prosecution of firearms.
- 6) Research DECA (Drug Endangered Children's Act) programs by collaborating with local law enforcement agencies in an effort to protect the children of Morgan County from the dangers associated with methamphetamines in the home.

Policy Recommendations

- Constructing a local juvenile detention center for any county of at least 90,000 population.
- State level agency collaboration in sharing information with each other in order to develop community-based resources.
- To be legally allowed to share a child's information among agencies when two or more agencies work with that child.
- Increasing funding for multi-needs children being served by more than one agency.
- Interfacing among automated (computer) systems maintained by the various state agencies, which deal with children and the provision of services to children.
- Supporting and enhancing the immediate delivery of mental health services in crisis situations for children.
- Increasing transportation services for parents and children so that agency services may be accessed.
- Identifying and addressing issues involving drugs, gangs and violence on both a state-wide and local basis.

Accomplishments

- At the September 9th CPC meeting we were faced with the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. On behalf of the council as a whole, Children's Policy Council Executive Director worked teamed with First Baptist Church and the Enrichment Center, a counseling center, in hosting a dinner for parents and their children. The Enrichment Center offered free counseling to the attendees while the younger children played in the recreational outreach center.
- At the September 9th CPC meeting, Sgt. Greg Cain of the Decatur Police Department presented information on Gang Involvement. He also brought some typical gang items such as t-shirts, hats, jewelry, etc. for our viewing.
- At the November 4 CPC meeting, the Morgan County Children's Policy voted to pursue Bylaws and a Strategic Plan for our council and we adopted a mission statement. Dr. Sara Bruce Hall and Children's Policy Council Executive Director are currently working with community leaders in developing training for a strategic plan.
- In December, Children's Policy Council Executive Director attended the White House Workshop of Faith Based Community Initiatives in Nashville, Tennessee.
- In March, Children's Policy Council Executive Director attended the 2006 Children's Services Conference in Tuscumbia, Alabama.
- At the March 10th CPC Meeting, Children's Policy Council Executive Director shared with the council her deep concern for Internet Safety for our children. The members shared same concern. As a result, Children's Policy Council Executive Director collaborated with the Decatur Police Department and Sgt. Greg Cain in presenting the I-Safe program at First Baptist Church. We had 150+ in attendance.
- At the March 10th CPC Meeting, Bill Giguere of the North Alabama Mental Health Center facilitated a Grant Workshop. A copy of the Workshop materials is available on the MCCPC Website.
- The Morgan County Children's Policy Council collaborated with the Morgan County Substance Abuse Network in providing a community wide conference which addressed children's health and safety issues.
- At the April 6th CPC meeting, the Mental Health Association hosted a Bylaws Training for United Way Agencies and Morgan County Children's Policy Council Members. As a result, CPC Coordinator drafted proposed Bylaws and the council voted and adopted these at the June 16 meeting.
- At the May 12th CPC meeting, George Pollitt of the United Way, presented the United Way's Outcome Measurement Program. George's presentation gave the council a clearer understanding of how to see if agency programs really make a difference in the lives of people.

- PACT (Parents and Children Together) added an additional FACT (Family Assistance Through Community Ties) program in the Decatur City School System. The need for a program identifying and addressing the needs of children and families by providing onsite mini-resource centers located within specific schools was a listed need on the 2005 Needs Assessment. The FACT program collaborates with local agencies, mental health workers and parent volunteers.
- A major accomplishment was the creation of a new program geared to families going through a divorce and how to best deal with the situation by not putting the children in the "middle". The Enrichment Center took an identified need listed on the 2005 Needs Assessment and developed their program entitled "Children in the Middle". This program was presented before the Morgan County Bar Association and was highly recommended.
- This past the year the Morgan County Children's Policy Council has had on average 18 members present at each meeting. We have added 12 new members.
- The Morgan County Children's Policy Council collaborated with the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs and conducted a Level's Capacity Training on September 23 at the Morgan County Courthouse. We had attendees from Morgan, Lawrence and Limestone counties attending the ½ day training. As a result of this training, we as a council were challenged to make the necessary steps toward moving our council to the next level.

Additional Members:

Stacey Adams
Danny Gibson
Teresa Young
Joy Watkins
George Pollitt
Tonita Phipps
Melody Harris
Jamie Waldrep
Lt. Jim Chambers
Fred Bueto
Joe Walters
Tim Bolding
Pamela Bolding